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DR. PROUDFIT'S SERMON,
ON THE DEATH OF DE WITT CLINTON.

Proceedings of the Bar.

AT a meeting of the members of the bar of the county of Washington, held at the court house, in the town of Salem, on the 12th day of March, 1828—Hon. GERRIT WENDELL, was called to the chair, and *Jesse S. Leigh*, Esq. appointed secretary.

The members of this bar being deeply impressed with the very able and eloquent discourse delivered by the Rev. Dr. Proudfit, at his Church in this village, in commemoration of the death of the late Gov. Clinton :—

Therefore, *resolved*, That a committee of three members of the bar be appointed to wait on the Rev. Dr. Proudfit, and request a copy of his discourse for publication.

Resolved, That John M'Lean, jun. Samuel Stevens, and Roswell Weston, Esquires, compose that committee.

GERRIT WENDELL, *Chairman.*

JESSE S. LEIGH, *Secretary.*

THE

Agency of God in the Elevation of Man.

4605

A SERMON,

COMMEMORATIVE OF THE EMINENT TALENTS, AND PRIVATE VIRTUES, AND PUBLIC SERVICES OF HIS EXCELLENCY DE WITT CLINTON, LATE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NEW-YORK:

PREACHED AT SALEM, N. Y. MARCH 11, 1828.

BY ALEXANDER PROUDFIT, *D. D.*

SALEM, N. Y.
Printed by Dodd & Stevenson.
1828.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

Rev. Dr. A. Proudfit,

Sir—In compliance with a resolution, adopted at a meeting of the gentlemen of the bar of the county of Washington, we have the pleasure of transmitting to you a copy of that resolution, and of respectfully requesting that you will consent to furnish us with a copy of the discourse referred to in that resolution, with a view to its publication.

Respectfully your Ob't Serv'ts.

JOHN M'LEAN, jun.
SAMUEL STEVENS.
ROSWELL WESTON.

Salem, *March* 13, 1828.

SALEM, *March* 15, 1828.

Rev. Dr. A. Proudfit,

Sir—We the undersigned, Committee of Arrangements, cordially tender you our thanks for the able and eloquent discourse delivered by you, at the request of the citizens of this town, on the occasion of the death of the lamented Gov. Clinton, and respectfully solicit a copy of that discourse for publication.

Respectfully your Ob't Serv'ts.

JOHN M'LEAN, jun.
JOHN M'MURRAY,
WILLIAM M'FARLAND,
ASA FITCH,
JOHN WILLARD.

To the Committees of the Bar, and of the citizens of Salem.

GENTLEMEN,

In compliance with your request, I transmit a copy of the sermon commemorative of the virtues of our late illustrious Chief Magistrate, and regret that, owing to the pressure of other duties, I had not time to render it more worthy of the occasion and the audience.

With great respect, I am your friend, and humble servant,

ALEXANDER PROUDFIT.

Salem, March 16, 1828.

SERMON.

——AND IN THINE HAND IT IS TO MAKE GREAT.....1 *Chron.* xxix. 12.

HOW ARE THE MIGHTY FALLEN!.....2 *Sam.* i. 19.

TO contemplate the perfections of God, as they are exhibited in the immense variety of his works; in all that diversity of property which he has imparted, both to matter and mind, is an exercise equally pleasant and profitable. Amidst these contemplations we discern a display of wisdom, and power, and munificence to which there are no bounds, and of sovereignty which we are constrained to admire and adore. In the inanimate parts of creation, one object delights with its variegated colouring; another with its exquisite odours, while the magnificence of another excites our admiration and awe. There is scarcely a comparison between the atom which floats in the air, invisible to the naked eye, and that Prince of luminaries which rolls majestic in the heavens, and in his course sheds light and heat and joy through every part of the system which we inhabit. In those various orbs which are connected with our world, and on which we frequently gaze with delight, different degrees of grandeur are visible. "The glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory." Who can count all the

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links of that mighty chain in animated being which extends from the little insect, that moves unperceived upon the earth, to the eagle, who fearlessly stretches her wings, and explores the trackless air, and mounts up to the heavens, and, as the patriarch sublimely expresses it, "maketh her nest on high?" If we pursue our contemplations, and make a transition from the regions of matter to those of mind, the same diversity appears in the system of rational being. We read in scripture of "angel and arch-angel," of "cherubim and seraphim," of "thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers." Even in this heavenly hierarchy while we discover a diversity of rank, some subordinate and others superior, we also behold a diversity in their grade of intellect, one angel soaring above another angel in greater expansion of mind.—But probably there is no department throughout the empire of Jehovah where this variety is more visible than in the family of man. While its members are created with a difference of external form, varying in colour, in complexion, in stature, and strength of body, they differ equally in their intellectual endowments; in their capacities for occupying exalted stations, and exerting an important influence in controlling the affairs of the world. And in all this distinction it becomes us to realize the sovereign agency of Him "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;" whose prerogative "it is to make great."

Fellow-Citizens—We are convened, on the present occasion, by a dispensation of Divine Providence both affecting and awful. The Chief Magistrate of this commonwealth; the man on whom the eyes of the people of our own state, of our common country, of no inconsiderable portion of the civilized world, have been fastened with eager and elevated expectations, is among us no more; no more to direct the destinies of our rapidly rising empire; no more to prosecute and complete those magnificent schemes of public improvement which his own mighty mind had projected, and so auspiciously commenced; no more to foster by his influence and counsels the arts and the

sciences; no more to sooth the anguish of the oppressed, to dry up the tears of the orphan, and the widow, and the fatherless, by devising other means for the melioration of their miseries; no more to cherish by his commanding presence and eloquence those religious institutions which contemplate for their object the immortal interests of the destitute in our own country and throughout the world. By the sovereign, mysterious, yet all-wise visitation of the great Arbiter of life and of death, he is suddenly removed from us; removed in the full vigour of his intellectual strength; in the unabated ardour of his exertions for the public welfare; in the zenith of his usefulness, "when his glory was yet fresh in him," and his sun of life had scarcely crossed its meridian. "How are the mighty fallen!"

It is an interesting fact in the government of God that the same individual rarely, perhaps never, appeared equally distinguished in the church and in the world. Although the members of these kingdoms are intermingled in the present, promiscuous state, and interwoven by a thousand different relations, yet the kingdoms themselves are utterly distinct, and independent of each other; they are subordinate to different heads; they are governed by different codes of law, and are instituted for different purposes; the one being intended to regulate the destinies of man for time, and the other to promote his happiness for eternity; and therefore no man ever appeared equally pre-eminent in advancing the interests of both. A beneficent God is more impartial in the distribution of his honours than to accumulate them with such profusion on the same person, and render him alike illustrious in "that kingdom which is not of this world," and in that kingdom which is of this world. When, therefore, an eminent luminary in the church is suddenly extinguished; a man celebrated for his gifts, for his graces, for his uniform and ardent devotion to the honour of his Master, and to the interests of the souls of men, there is occasion for the Christian to mourn. "Samuel the prophet died, and all Israel lamented him." When a luminary in the commonwealth is sud-

denly extinguished; a magistrate, eminent for the splendour of his talents, for the variety and lustre of his virtues; for his faithful and disinterested exertions in promoting the welfare of his country and of mankind, the citizen is then called to "put on sackcloth" and mourn the bereavement. "Josiah the king was slain in the field of battle," and the sacred historian informs us that "all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah: and Jeremiah the prophet lamented for Josiah, and all the singing men and singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations."

In attempting, with great deference and diffidence, to direct the reflections of this honourable Court, and highly respected audience, in a manner answerable to the solemnity of the occasion, it is designed to illustrate the agency of God in the elevation of particular men, and notice those moral instructions which may be derived from their death.

I. Individuals are *great* originally by the superiority of their intellectual endowments; by receiving from their Creator powers of mind answerable in their extent to the loftiness of the station which they are designed to occupy, and the arduousness and importance of the work which they are destined to accomplish. While the Lord God acts independently and without control in every part of his dominions, performing all his pleasure by an agency invisible, yet absolute and irresistible, he executes his purposes by secondary instruments, and furnishes them with every qualification requisite for the execution of the work which he assigns them. Men are frequently considered the authors of their own destinies in the world; they are represented as rising to fortune, or fame, or influence, by their own exertions with the combination of external causes; and there is a degree of truth in the assertion. Much depends on our own prudence, and perseverance, and enterprize, with the concurrence of auspicious circumstances, for that grade of elevation to which we advance in society, and that influence which we possess in controlling the affairs of the world. Yet, the man who ultimately becomes

great, was originally great. Those emergencies which roused him to exertion, and placed him in a conspicuous position were only the occasion of evolving and awaking to action talent which formerly lay folded in his bosom as its native element. The skilful architect, who contemplates the erection of an edifice, adapts the foundation, both in its extent and solidity, to the magnitude of the superstructure which he intends to build on it. Any spot of earth, however barren, may be rendered in some measure productive by a high degree of cultivation, but where extraordinary productions are expected the soil itself must be natively fertile. The acorn by the germination of which the oak of most majestic form is produced, differs in its original strata from the acorn which produces the ordinary tree. These observations are as applicable to the mental and moral world as they are to the material. When a sovereign God, in his prescience, ordains an individual for some extraordinary enterprize; for exploring the untrodden path, or the execution of some project beyond the ordinary sphere of human exertion,he endows him with a talent commensurate to the arduousness and magnanimity of the design. The mind of such a man is cast in a mould of extraordinary dimensions, and all the energy which he displays in the projection or prosecution of bold, original enterprizes is merely the explosion of genius deposited by the hand of his Creator. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." When the tabernacle of novel, complicated machinery, was to be constructed in the wilderness for the worship of Jehovah, men were qualified for the purpose; "they were filled with the spirit of God in wisdom, and in knowledge in all manner of workmanship" for the execution of the design. To one the Lord God communicates a vigilance which no intrigue can elude; another he inspires with a fortitude of spirit which danger cannot appal; to another he imparts a firmness of purpose which disaster cannot dishearten; another he inspires with a degree of patience which neither toil, nor successive disappoint-

ments can exhaust; to another he imparts a purity, a disinterestedness of motive which no temptation can either bribe, or corrupt; another he inspires with a spirit for daring enterprize; for bold, undaunted adventure in the moral, or political, or physical world. Thus we behold Newton, by the efforts of his own genius, rising spontaneously from his native sphere; with the daring, adventurous flight of the eagle soaring to the heavens; surveying those radiant orbs which there revolve in infinite space; numbering and naming them; measuring their magnitudes; ascertaining their relative positions; computing the velocity of their motions; calculating also their distances from each other, and from us. While Newton ranges over the untrodden, immeasurable fields of matter, Locke, with a talent equally original, and still more acute, undertakes to explore the darker region of mind; pursues it in all its windings and labyrinths; evolves its most intricate foldings; analyzes its curious mechanism; developes its resources; unfolds its motives, and with a magic hand touches all the springs of human action. And yet, although these men stood alone, erected like prominent light-houses on the shore of oceans of matter and mind hitherto unexplored, were there not thousands who had been educated within the walls of the same college; drinking at the same fountains of ancient and modern literature, and receiving instruction from the same lips? But they were formed by their Creator for venturing out of the ordinary track; for taking a wider, more excursive range, and exploring an unknown path in which others might follow to deeper discoveries of his perfections as they are displayed in the immensity of his works. And while we behold sovereignty in this dispensation of the Almighty, we may also discern his infinite wisdom. The talent is not lavished where there is not some important design to be accomplished. Other Newtons are not furnished because there are not other systems and worlds to be unfolded to human view, and other Lockes would be superfluous unless the mind of man had undergone an entire revolution in its powers and principles of action.

2d. The Lord God renders men *great* by assigning them situations on the public theatre where their various talents may be exerted in the most conspicuous manner, and to the greatest advantage for the advancement of his own glory, and the interests of their generation. Many, without doubt, have passed thro' the world in obscurity; moved unnoticed in the humbler walks of life, who, with the advantages of education and other favourable circumstances, might have reflected honour on the most exalted stations in society.

> "Hearts once pregnant with celestial fire,
> "Hands which the rod of empire might have swayed,
> "Or waked to ecstacy the living lyre.
> "But knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
> "Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unrol;
> "Chill penury repressed their noble rage,
> "And froze the genial current of the soul."

A lamp, however liberally replenished with oil, or however luminously it blazes forth, must illumine a very contracted sphere unless placed on some eminence. The natural sun, by having his position in the centre, irradiates, and fertilizes, and cheers every orb in the system with which he is connected. Thus the Disposer of events, when he ordains an individual to be great, furnishes some prominent theatre on which he may act, and in his providence prepares the way for his advancement to occupy it; calls him forth to some elevated situation in society favorable for the exercise and exhibition of all his endowments, both natural and acquired. Moses was naturally a *goodly* child, his countenance beamed forth the lustre of innate talent; "he was learned also in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds," yet he emerged from obscurity, and rose to ever-memorable notice by his call to execute the purposes of heaven in the redemption of his kindred from the chains of the obdurate Pharaoh. The moral gloom, deeper than the shades of midnight, which had settled for ages upon the nations, was the occasion of raising to imperishable remembrance in the church a

Luther, a Calvin, a Cranmer, and a Knox, who were the instruments of dissipating that darkness by the diffusion of evangelic light. The groans of the Britons, extorted alternately by the incursions of foes without, and the oppressions of tyrants among themselves, were the occasions of rendering so illustrious in the history of civil liberty their Alfreds, and Marlboroughs, and Sydneys, and Hamdens: and the revolutionary conflict in our own country, and the consequent establishment of our popular institutions on the broad basis of equal representation, have engraven on monuments more imperishable than marble or brass the names of our Washingtons, and Adamses, and Jeffersons, and Clintons, and their illustrious compeers and companions in the field, and in the cabinet. These men were naturally *great;* the foundation of their future elevation was laid deep, by the hand of their Creator, in the original structure of their intellect; and the peculiarity of the age and country where they respectively arose merely brought into requisition their native Herculean powers. They were furnished by nature with a panoply, and the battles which they were obliged to fight; the duties which they were called to perform on the broad theatre of the world, afforded opportunity for the exercise of every part of their armour. The angry storms which they were called to breast; the numerous obstacles to be surmounted; the exigencies for which it was necessary to make provision; the collision of feeling and of interest, which they were obliged either to soften or control, in the boldness of their enterprise, required the full exercise of their patience, and heroism, and all their intellectual resources. And yet although a thousand adventitious, and, in our estimation, accidental occurrences co-operated in exalting them to the highest pinnacle of human greatness, every step which they advanced, from the commencement of their elevation until they had reached the summit of their glory, was directed by the invisible, all-controlling agency of the sovereign Ruler of the Universe. "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, but

from Jehovah alone. He putteth down one, and setteth another up." All this dominion in the "armies both of heaven and of earth" he challengeth as his own high and unalienable prerogative. "By me kings reign and princes decree justice; by me princes rule and nobles, even all the judges of the earth." He created the world, and founded the church for the display of his perfections, and qualifies the instruments of his own selection for managing the interests of both. Therefore our tribute of respect to the memory of distinguished benefactors, either civil or ecclesiastical, ought to be mingled with devout emotions of gratitude to that Being who "teaches our senators wisdom;" who gives purity of motive to our patriots; who endows them with talents corresponding to their high vocation; whose peculiar prerogative it is to "make great."

From these reflections on the agency of God in raising particular men to distinction, we are led to contemplate

II. Those moral instructions which may be derived from the death of the illustrious. "How are the mighty fallen!"

1st. In this event we learn the perishable nature of all the glory of this world. There is a splendour hovering around genius, and fortune, and noble rank, and high literary attainment, and elevated station, which almost necessarily dazzles the eye of the spectator. Perhaps no one, not the most stoical, the most mortified to the world, is capable altogether of resisting the fascinating charm; but in death the spell is instantly dissolved; the enchantment is broken, and all the brilliancy which formerly fascinated is succeeded by sullen darkness and gloom. Before the assault of this last foe, "the king of terrors," all created distinctions are prostrated in promiscuous ruin, and all classes of men must bow in prompt, although reluctant submission. The dart of this fatal archer is levelled with equal execution against the master and the slave; against the loftiest monarch and the most insignificant clown.

"Princes, this clay must be your bed,
"In spite of all your towers;
"The tall, the wise, the reverend head
"Must lie as low as ours."

It is no matter how exalted the position which the individual occupied; it is no matter how large the sphere which he illumined by the blaze of his genius or learning; it is no matter how many thousands or millions he had trodden beneath his feet in the proud march of his military prowess; the moment he is touched by the iron sceptre of the monarch of the grave his glory is blighted; "his breath departs; he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Come, most respected hearers, and retire with me for a few moments to the grave, and there we may see inscribed in characters the most legible VANITY OF VANITIES; ALL IS VANITY: ALL FLESH IS AS GRASS, AND ALL THE GLORY OF MAN IS AS THE FLOWER OF THE GRASS. Here you behold the eye, which once dazzled with its lustre, now languid and dim; the voice, which once delighted, and awed, and overwhelmed with the resistless energy of its eloquence, is now silent for ever; that countenance, which once beamed intelligence and good will, has become pale, inexpressive, and ghastly; he who once sat majestic upon the throne, wearing the crown, waving the sceptre, or who had marched at the head of victorious legions, now lies a submissive victim at the shrine of this unrelenting, all-conquering foe; and he who claimed houses, or villages, or territories as his property is now confined to the narrow coffin and grave as his inheritance and home. "How are the mighty fallen!" Tell me, who of you could now discriminate the dust of a Cæsar from that of the most insignificant soldier who had fought in his ranks, or assisted in siezing for him the laurel and the palm? Who of you could distinguish the ashes of the sceptred monarch, who once arrogated provinces, or continents, or even the world as his dominion, from those of the most abject minion whom he had imperiously controlled?

2d. We learn from the death of the illustrious

the folly of relying on created instruments as our defence or support. We are all naturally prone to extremes in relation to those who appear in the character of rulers, either civil or sacred, and are often guilty of vilifying the persons, and undervaluing the services of our most generous benefactors. We look principally at their supposed imperfections; at their omissions of what in our opinion they might have performed, or at every error, real or imaginary, with which they appear chargeable in their official capacity, and these defects are industriously and wilfully exposed, and even exaggerated. When any new trouble occurred in the camp of Israel, during their journeyings to Canaan; when any obstacle impeded their march, or an enemy invaded or annoyed, they instantly "murmured against Moses," their disinterested, magnanimous deliverer. Again, owing to the same infatuation, or atheism which is interwoven with our degenerate nature, we often idolize the instruments of our blessings, and in our estimation substitute them in the room of a munificent God. We imagine that if particular, prominent personages were removed; those who have been long, and signally instrumental in advancing the interests of the church, or of the nation, the loss is irreparable; that all progress in religion, and improvement in the arts, and the sciences, and civil government must necessarily be arrested. Such conclusions betray a shameful and criminal dependence on "the arm of flesh;" a confidence on the creature which ought to be reposed exclusively on the Creator, who is able, with infinite ease, to accomplish his purposes without the intervention of instruments, or to replace others in the room of those whom he removes. Previous to the translation of Elijah, that prophet of distinguished memory under the former dispensation, the youthful Elisha exclaims, in the language of distrust and despondency, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" foreboding that with the translation of the man the safety, and prosperity, and glory of the nation must necessarily depart. Perhaps the

importance of this remark has rarely appeared more obvious than in the history of England at the commencement of the reformation. Edward the VIth, early appeared on the side of the reformers, and, with their cause, identified his own fame, and fortune, and destinies for both worlds. Such were the piety, and talents, and zeal of this amiable Prince, that the most elevated hopes were entertained from his influence in promoting the new religion. But the prospects of the Protestants were suddenly and awfully clouded, in the premature removal by death of this heir apparent to the throne, and with his body their hopes were seemingly entombed. Yet notwithstanding these portentous forebodings, the light of the reformation continued to burst forth; its radiance was diffused in every direction, and it has been "shining brighter and brighter" unto the present day.

3d. "The mighty fall" that others may have an opportunity of advancing on the theatre of public life, and in their turn occupying their talents in the service of their God, and of their generation. There is a constant ebbing and flowing in all the affairs of man, and as no particular country or age is honoured by the sovereign disposer of events for the accomplishment of all that is excellent or interesting in the world, neither will any individual be permitted to live for ever, and monopolize an exclusive pre-eminence. It is obviously the divine pleasure that there should be a frequent revolution in what is deemed most desirable or estimable on earth. Rarely do wealth, or talent, or influence, or temporal dignities descend thro' many successive generations in the same family; and agreeably to this plan of the divine administration, men, who have been filling up for a considerable time, an extended and elevated sphere in society; who have attracted the attention and commanded the admiration of others by the lustre of their talents, or the eminence of their usefulness are called from the public theatre that an avenue may be opened for others to advance in their room, and become emulous of the same honourable distinction. Moses was employed for re-

deeming the offspring of Abraham from their degradation and servitude in Egypt, but Joshua must introduce them to the actual possession of the land of promise. David, under the inspiration of the Almighty, and in the fervour of his zeal, projected the magnificent plan of the temple, and with a liberality honourable to himself and his cause, furnished the materials; but for Solomon, his son and successor, was reserved the glory of 'building the house.' The twelve apostles of the Lamb, "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," laid broad and deep the foundation of the Christian Church, but in their order they all died, that others, filled with the same Spirit, and fired with the same zeal, might carry on the sacred superstructure. Luther, and Calvin, and Knox were the primary instruments of sweeping off that rubbish of superstition, with which mercenary priests and princes had for ages been concealing the true light, but they rested from their labours, and others have been employed, and will be employed in the diffusion of this light, until its radiance is reflected over every land, and the earth is illumined with its glory. Our fathers, of venerated memory, were honored by the God of nations for demonstrating with new evidence, on this western continent, the principles of rational liberty; for vindicating the unalienable rights of man, and creating a new era in the intellectual, and moral, and political condition of the world, and afterwards retired from the public theatre, and on us their descendants and successors rests the obligation of cherishing the sacred deposit; of aiming to roll back this flood of light to the shores of every continent and isle, until the recognition of the equal rights of man has become co-extensive with the circumference of our globe, and co-eval with the duration of time.

The occasion of our meeting and your own expectations require that I now advert, for a few moments, to the character of our late, illustrious Chief Magistrate, whose death we, in common with his family, and friends, and the nation, have been deploring. When an individual becomes distinguished in any of

the great departments of human life, as a poet, or philosopher, or hero, or divine, different countries often appear emulous for the honour of giving him birth. Seven cities in Greece offered their pretensions for being regarded as the birth place of the immortal Grecian bard. But in the present instance there is no room for competitions of this kind. De Witt Clinton was a native of our own state, born in the county of Orange, in the month of March, 1769. Although he was too young to occupy a prominent station during our struggle for independence, yet he early embarked on the agitated ocean of political life, and, with few intervals for repose from its anxieties and toils, has been constantly employed in some important, responsible situation, as an expression of the confidence of his fellow citizens in his talents and virtues. He officiated alternately as mayor of the city of New-York, as a senator in the councils of this state, as a senator in the councils of the United States, and by your suffrages has been called, at four different periods, to preside over you in the capacity of Chief Magistrate. His exertions, in the cause of his country and of mankind, commenced before he had fully attained the maturity of manhood, and they terminated only with the termination of his earthly existence, as he had been attending to the discharge of his official duties on the very day which preceded his death; nay, after the fatal arrow had left its quiver, and was actually on the wing, and had nearly reached its illustrious victim, he was mingling familiarly in the society of his children, and with the affection of a fond father communicating parental instruction and advice.

> "Ah! cruel death is always near,
> "So frail a thing is man."

De Witt Clinton was emphatically "rocked in the cradle of liberty," and inhaled from his earliest infancy its genial, uncontaminated atmosphere. His father, James Clinton, sustained, with high reputation to himself and his country, the office of Major General in the army of the revolution, and his still more

distinguished relative, George Clinton, whether we recollect his services as a military man, animating the generous hosts of freemen to the vindication of their rights, or as a statesman, deliberating in our public councils, or as the governor of this state, or as the vice president of the United States, is entitled to a lofty eminence on the roll of American patriots. Indeed, the love of liberty and an inextinguishable zeal for its promotion appear to have been hereditary in the family from generation to generation. Their great ancestor lived in England during the arbitrary reign of Charles the first, and, so far as we can ascertain, co-operated with the puritans in resisting the encroachments of that intolerant, licentious prince; he afterwards retired to Ireland, where he married and spent the residue of his years. The family emigrated from Ireland to the American continent, and settled in this state during the colonial government: And from the first appearance, on this western horizon, of that storm which burst forth in the war of the revolution, and ultimately issued in the recognition of our independence among the sovereignties of the earth, the name of Clinton occupies a large space on the pages of our history.

It is altogether unnecessary, and perhaps would be unseasonable to detain you with a particular detail of the exertions of our late governor in advancing all the important interests of our common country, the liberal and humane arts, the cause of science, of agriculture, of commerce, of manufactures, and particularly in projecting and prosecuting to its consummation, that splendid prodigy of modern times, the union of the waters of our interior oceans with those of the Atlantic; an enterprise, the execution of which has excited the admiration and envy of the old world, has given to his native state an acknowledged ascendancy over all her sisters in the confederacy, and will probably remain a lasting source of emolument to our public treasury. I feel no disposition to attribute to his genius or patriotism the exclusive honour of accomplishing this mighty project of public improvement and

aggrandizement. I revere the names of his associates who concurred and co-operated with him in this benevolent and magnanimous enterprise; for the character of those who are yet living, and for the memory of such as are dead, I cherish the most profound respect and veneration. It will, however, be readily acknowledged that in the commencement and completion of this patriotic project for promoting the interests, and elevating the character of our state, De Witt Clinton uniformly acted a prominent part, and exerted a pre-eminent, controlling influence. He was "*primus inter pares.*" In the widely extended forest, a thousand trees of majestic form may arrest the eye, yet you will occasionally notice one tree towering above the others; surpassing them in the loftiness of its summit, and the wider expansion of its branches. In gazing upon the evening firmament you behold innumerable orbs of resplendent lustre, yet here and there, scattered over the magnificent concave, you discover one star outburning the others, and differing from them by "greater degrees of glory."

In his political career, the views of Clinton did not always harmonize with those of his companions in the cabinet, nor of his fellow-citizens at large. Collisions of opinion, in this imperfect state, must be expected, and when managed with moderation contribute, in no inconsiderable degree, to the safety of our popular government. Besides, men equally great and disinterested, both in the church and the commonwealth, frequently entertain different sentiments in relation to the most appropriate means for promoting the general interests of both. But no other eulogy over his memory is necessary; no higher eulogy can be pronounced; no more commanding, convincing testimony of the possession which he maintained in the confidence, and esteem, and even the affections of all, than the shock which was instantaneously produced by the intelligence of his death; it was verily the shock of an earthquake, felt not merely through the circle of his family, and friends, and in the city where he resided, and among the honourable the members of

the legislature, which was then in session, but felt thro' every nerve of the state and the nation. In the literary, and moral, and political world, it resembled one of those mighty concussions in the natural, by which the very elements are agitated; and the earth trembles to its centre. "The prejudices of party were instantly absorbed in the overflowing tide of national grief." All hearts were apparently appalled; every countenance was sad, and there was one general, spontaneous burst of lamentation, "how are the mighty fallen! a void is created in the councils of our state, and of our nation, and of the civilized world, which a man, with no ordinary dimensions of mind, is capable of filling up. Who, that witnessed the melancholy scene, can forget the melted hearts, and plaintive sighs, and flowing tears, of his personal friends, and political associates, when they took their final glance of his earthly remains, majestic in ruins, before the coffin concealed them for ever from mortal view?—His venerable form, his imposing attitude, his dignified deportment, his majestic countenance, a vivid expression of the loftiness of the spirit which enlivened it, his eye beaming intelligence and benignity, and his voice imparting instruction, must long be fresh in our recollections. "*Clarum et venerabile nomen.*" Curiosity might prompt us to pursue the immortal spirit, bursting from its imprisonment in the body, and winging its eventful, awful flight; but I repress these bold, unwarranted speculations. Death is the horizon which terminates the vision of mortals. The curtain which conceals the arcana of the invisible world is neither to be lifted up, nor drawn aside, by presumptuous hands.

Men absorbed in the pursuits of science, or philosophy, or politics, often stand aloof from any attention to the interests of religion. In the pride of their fancied superiority they regard its concerns as suited to more vulgar, contracted minds; to those who have more leisure than themselves, or who are occupied in speculations less sublime and interesting. From this community of "sciolists" De Witt Clinton, with Sir Isaac Newton at his side, and Locke, and Boyle, and

Bacon, and Addison, and a host of others of the first order of intellect, and the highest attainments in literature, will stand to future ages an honourable exception. He evinced an unfeigned respect for the Christian religion, and exerted an important influence in promoting its more general extension; he was occasionally employed in the investigation of its mysteries, and defence of its doctrines, and I have often heard him expressing an ardent solicitude that his own children might be ranged in the ranks of its advocates and champions.

While, therefore, you find the literary journals of our own country, and of foreign countries, replenished with his laboured disquisitions on ethics, on jurisprudence, on political economy, on the laws of nature and of nations, you also find the annual reports of our benevolent institutions, of our bible, and missionary, and education societies, adorned and enriched with his animated and affectionate addresses. None who feel interested in the distribution of the scriptures, and in the prosperity and glory of the church, can peruse, without an increased veneration for his character, the following extract from his polished, powerful, and eloquent pen. "Christianity being a revelation from God, in diffusing the sacred volume we perform a solemn duty, and render an all-important benefit to the world. The Christian religion, armed with power, adorned with light, fortified by truth, and revealed by God; foretold in the prophecies, attested by miracles, sealed with the blood of saints, and sublimed with the morality of heaven, is presented to man in order to secure his felicity in the regions of eternal bliss."* He was connected with almost all those great institutions which constitute the glory of the present age, and, from its first organization, was a vice president of the American Bible Society, that moral luminary which has already irradiated "with the light of immortality and life" no inconsiderable portion of this western continent, and presided, at its last anniversary, with his characteristic dignity and zeal.

* His addresses before the American Bible Society in 1823 and 25

Although governor Clinton was distinguished for liberality of feeling and conduct, towards the "excellent" of all denominations, yet his principles, on the subject of ecclesiastical polity, both from education and attachment, were decidedly Presbyterian; these he regarded, not only as the most scriptural, as the most liberal in their provisions, as the least liable to prostitution from the ambition and intolerance of the clergy, but as the most congenial to the spirit of our republican government: He was, for several years, president of the Presbyterian Education Society, an institution formed for the purpose of furnishing a competent ministry for the supply of our frontier settlements. His sentiments on this subject are happily expressed in a learned and luminous address, recently delivered before a literary society connected with Union College. "Christianity," he remarks, "in its essence, its doctrines, and its forms, is republican; it inculcates the natural equality of man; it teaches our descent from a common parent, and it points to our origin and end; to our nativity, and graves; and to our immortal destinies as illustrations of this impressive truth."

There was one prominent feature in the character of Clinton, by which he stood distinguished from other illustrious men in general, who have been the ornament of our nature and world, and which, perhaps, contributed as much to its moral grandeur and perfection as any excellence which we have noticed. While he possessed a mind capable of the widest and loftiest intellectual range; comprehending, with an intuitive glance, the most intricate and difficult problem in science or national policy; interests which to others appeared inferior in their importance, neither escaped his attention nor were left without his patronage. He reflected that the smaller wheels in a vast complicated machine were essential to its due proportions and order equally with the larger. He fostered, therefore, with parental solicitude and affection our infant schools, our Sabbath and Lancasterian Schools, our Asylum for the Orphan, for the Insane, for the Deaf

and Dumb, and cherished also with a generous ardour the interests of our Academies and Colleges. But his favourite object in the empire of letters, and one to which he devoted his fondest affections, and promoted with unremitting solicitude, was the system of Common Schools, which are so successfully established in our state. These he regarded as the most benevolent in their results, tending to elevate the children of the poor to their proper rank in society, and open for them every avenue to offices of emolument and honour, in common with the children of the opulent, by extending to them the elements of education; these he also considered as constituting, under the auspices of Divine Providence, the principal, the exclusive guarantee for the permanency of our popular institutions. It was his great political axiom; one which was frequently the theme of his conversation with private friends, and under the influence of which he was actuated in every part of his official conduct, that a population ignorant or licentious is utterly incapable of self-government; and on the other hand, that a nation, enlightened, and virtuous, and pious, can never be enslaved. The hallowed flame kindled at the altars of science and religion, is inextinguishable as the lamps of heaven. He, therefore, remarks, in the address, to which we have already alluded, "Education includes moral no less than intellectual culture; the georgicks of the heart no less than of the head; and we must emphatically look up to a general diffusion of knowledge as the palladium of a free government; the guarantee of the representative system; the Ægis of our federative existence." These sentiments perfectly harmonize with the following admonitions of the immortal founder of our republic, in his farewell address to the nation which he had defended with his sword, and fostered with his counsels and benedictions. "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political properity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. Promote, then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the ge-

neral diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened."

I trust that I need feel no apprehensions of being impeached with servile adulation, or with an attempt to give an exaggerated colouring to the character of the illustrious dead: Any extravagant indulgencies of imagination would be equally unbecoming the solemnity of the occasion, or the sanctity of the office which I sustain, or of the place where I now stand, and indeed derogatory to the memory of our departed benefactor and friend. His name is embalmed in the affections of the fatherless, and the orphan, and the widow; it is embalmed in the tender recollections of the patrons of the literary, and religious, and benevolent institutions which adorn our country and age. It is embalmed in the tears not only of his own family, but of the nation; and posterity and the civilized world will be the repositories of his fame. As a patriot, as a statesman, as a philosopher, as a philanthropist, as a benefactor of the poor, as a generous patron of the sciences and liberal arts, as the ardent advocate of every magnanimous measure, which tended to the moral or political elevation of his native state, or to perpetuate the liberties of his country; as the unfeigned friend of every institution which contemplated for its object, the melioration of the miseries of his fellow men, or the promotion of their immortal interests, the fame of De Witt Clinton will roll down the tide of time, augmenting in its effulgence with each successive age, while religion, or learning, or civil liberty are appreciated in our world. His name is already inscribed on the same roll with a Washington, and the honourable few, thinly scattered, in different regions and distant ages, who lived not for themselves or their families, but for their country and for mankind.

And now, fellow-citizens, amidst those melancholy privations which we are experiencing, year after year, may we not resume the plaintive exclamation,

"Our fathers where are they?" Those venerable men who fought for us in the field; who debated for us in the forum; who deliberated for us in the cabinet, and in their fervent supplications in the pulpit carried our appeal to the God of nations, are gone: We have seen them gliding along the stream of time until, with a few exceptions, they are all merged in "eternity's ocean." And whether we regard the purity of their patriotism, or the soundness of their political wisdom, or the fervour of their love of country, or the disinterestedness of their exertions, a constellation more bright, a constellation so bright, has rarely shed its lustre on this earth in any country or age. Rome could, indeed, boast of her Cæsar, and Greece of her Alexander, and France of her Napoleon, but the pre-eminence of these men consisted in the accumulation of those miseries which they were the instruments of inflicting on mankind. The prostration of the liberties of the world was the rude basis on which they attempted to rear the fabric of their fame. Their course was that of the comet, which scorches and consumes whatever lies within the sphere of its influence; and the groans of the oppressed and the bereaved ascended, not to the mercy-seat for benedictions on their heads, but to the awful throne of justice for the execution of vengeance. *Our* patriots were actuated by purer and nobler principles. Their elevation consisted, not merely in the pre-eminence of their talents, but of their virtues, and of those blessings which they were instrumental in diffusing. All solicitude for their own ease, or fame, or fortune, was seemingly absorbed in deeper solicitude for the welfare of their offspring, and of their country, and for the emancipation of a subjugated, and degraded world. Their march resembled that of the sun, which vivifies, and exhilerates, and cherishes, wherever it shines. But, although these venerable men are gone, how large is the legacy which they bequeathed? They have left the result of their political experience to instruct us; the example of their virtues to be imitated by us, and the patrimony of freedom, civil and sacred, to en-

rich us, and to be improved by us. Yes, that fair inheritance they have transmitted to us unincumbered; and our charter to it is written in the blood of martyred heroes, and patriots, and sages. Brethren, there is a responsibility resting upon us, their posterity and successors, which does not rest on the population of any other portion of the globe. More has been done for us, and therefore more is reasonably required of us. Indeed, as a nation, from the commencement of our history, we have been distinguished by the God of Providence from all the other nations of the earth. In contemplating his dealings with our fathers, when they tremblingly placed their feet on the shores of this western waste; their protection amidst the incursions of the aboriginal inhabitants; their triumph when compelled by a sense of self-justice to repel the impositions of the parent country; their harmony of sentiment in the digestion and adoption of our unparalleled civil constitution; our undisturbed repose while the tempest of war has been frequently bursting forth, and desolating the fairest portions of the eastern world; the progress of the finer arts, of literature, of commerce, of agriculture, and of the interests of religion; when all these facts are brought to our recollection, we are constrained, with emotions of amazement and of gratitude, to ask 'What hath Jehovah wrought?' I think of it, and speak of it with profound humility and awe, that, in his dispensations to us he has apparently departed from his ordinary track in dealing with the nations of the earth. His conduct originally with the colonies, and afterwards with the confederated states has approached nearer to miracle than his procedure with any people since the redemption of Israel from their bondage in Egypt and Babylon.—Holding in their hand the staff of the promise, our pilgrim fathers ventured on the mountain-wave of the Atlantic, and reached the margin of this hemisphere a little, impoverished, disheartened band, and to how many millions have they already multiplied? How has the "desert blossomed," and the barren wilderness under their cultivating hand become 'a fruitful field?'

Where once stood the unsightly, miserable hut of the Indian, you now behold the magnificent, hospitable mansion of civilized man, and the temples of devotion rearing their hallowed spires; you hear the melody of the "songs of salvation" bursting harmonious from ten thousand, thousand voices where nothing had been heard for ages but the howling of savage beasts, or the yells of more savage men; you see the lights of science and religion illumining and cheering alike the humble cottage and the splendid palace, and all the bounties of Providence, and the substantial enjoyments of life poured forth in rich profusion on the tables of the industrious, virtuous poor, no less than on those of the opulent. Here no distinctions of rank or character are recognized; none but those which are the result of an honourable competition for stations of emolument or trust. In the closet, and in the family, and in the sanctuary, we offer our orisons to the Author of our blessings, and there is none to disturb. No supercilious prelate "lords it over the conscience" of the Christian; no hungry tax-gatherer invades and plunders the field of the citizen. "Every man sits" peacefully "under his own vine, and beneath the shadow of his own fig-tree."

Thou Arbiter of worlds, who hast been in a manner so signal, the God of our fathers, continue thy smiles to us although their degenerate descendants; give to our civil magistrates, and our ministers of religion, and to all classes of our citizens "that righteousness which exalteth a nation:" May thy benediction descend in liberal measure on our beloved offspring, from generation to generation: May there be no limit to the duration of the liberties, and prosperity, and glory of our favoured country, but the consummation of time and the dissolution of worlds.

"Hail, O land, long may old time behold
"Freedom o'er thee her standard wide unfold,
"While ages shall roll on:
"Till to a chaos drops again this ball,
"Till worlds to primogenial nothing fall,
"And quench'd thy blaze, O Sun."

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